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The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR
M'GUTHCHEON

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"By heaven," he muttered, strangely vexed with her. "I fancy she means it. She's bent on showing me my place. But she might have come down and asked me good luck. That was little enough for her to do. Ah, well!" he sighed, putting it away from him.

As he turned into the tree-lined avenue near the gate a slender young woman in a green and white gown arose from a seat in the shade and stepped a pace forward, opening her parasol leisurely as he quickened his steps. Her eyes gleamed brightly, and she was breathing as one who has run swiftly.

"You are determined to go down there among those men?" she demanded, the smile suddenly giving way to a look of disapproval. She ignored his hand.

"Certainly," he said after the moment of bewilderment. "Why not? I thought you had made up your mind to let me go without a word for good luck." She found great difficulty in meeting the wistful look in his eyes. "You are good to come down here to say goodbye. We're almost strangers again."

"I did not come down to say goodbye," she said, her lips trembling ever so slightly.

"I don't understand," he said.

"I am going with you into the town—as a witness," she said, and her face went pale at the thought of it.

"Geevra," he cried, "you—you would do that?"

"Why not, Mr. Chase?" She tried to speak calmly, but she was trembling. After all, she was a slender, helpless girl—not an amazon! "I saw and heard everything. They won't believe me. If I swear to them that what you say is true they—"

Her hand was on his arm now, trembling, eager, yet charged with fear at the prospect ahead of her. He clasped the little hand in his and quickly lifted it to his lips.

"I'm happy again," he cried. "It's all right with me now." She withdrew her hand on the instant.

"No, no! It isn't that," she said, her eyes narrowing. "Don't misinterpret my coming here to say that I will go. It isn't because—no, it isn't that!"

"I was unhappy because you had forsaken me," he said gently. "You are brave—you are wonderful! But I can't take you down there. I know what will happen if they find him guilty. Goodbye, dear one. I'll come back—surely I'll come back. Thank you for sending me away happy."

"Won't you let me go with you?" she asked after a long, penetrating look into his eyes.

"I would not take you among them for all the world. You forget. Neither of us would come back."

"Neither of us?" she said slowly.

"I wouldn't come back without you," he said quietly, earnestly. She understood. "Goodbye! Don't worry about me. I am in no danger."

"Goodbye," she said, the princess once more. "I shall pray for you with all my soul." She gave him her hand. It was cold and lifeless. He pressed it warmly and went quickly away, leaving her standing there in the still shade of the sycamores, looking after him with eyes that grew wider and wider with the tears that welled up from behind.

Hours went by—slow, tortuous hours in which the souls of those who watched and waited for his return were tried to the utmost.

Once there came to the ears of the watchers on the mountain side the sound of distant shouts, later the brief rattle of firearms. The blood of every one turned cold with apprehension. Every voice was stifled, every eye wide with dread. Neenah screamed as she fled across the terrace toward the drawbridge, where Selim stood as motionless as a statue.

Luncheon time passed, and again, as if drawn by a magnet, the entire household made its way to the front of the chateau.

At last Selim uttered a shout of joy. He forgot the deference due his betters and unceremoniously dashed off toward the gates, followed by Neenah, who seemed possessed of wings.

Chase was returning!

They saw him coming up the drive, his hat in his hand, his white umbrella raised above his head. The eager, joyous watchers saw him greet Selim and his suffering wife. They saw Selim fall upon his knees, and they felt the tears rushing to their own eyes.

"Hurray!" shouted little Mr. Saunders in his excitement. Bowles and the three clerks joined him in the exhibition. The princess was conscious of the fact that at least five or six pairs of eyes were watching her face. She closed her lips and compelled her eyelids to obey the dictates of a resolute heart. She lowered them until they gave one the impression of indolent curiosity, even indifference. All the while her incomprehensible heart was thumping with a rapture that knew no allegiance to royal conventions.

A few minutes later he was among them, listening, with his cool, half satirical smile, to their protestations of joy and relief.

"Nonsense," he said in his most-deprecating voice, taking a seat beside the princess on the railing and fanning himself lazily with his hat, to the mortification of his body servant, who waved a huge palm leaf in vigorous

adulation. "It was nothing. Just being a witness, that's all. You'll find how easy it is when you get back to London and have to testify in the Skaggs will contest. Tell the truth, that's all." The princess was now looking at his brown face with eyes over which she had lost control. "Oh, by the bye," he said, as if struck by a sudden thought, "it is my painful duty to announce to the Mesdames von Blitz that they are widows."

There was a dead silence. The three women stared up at him, unconprehending.

"Yes," he went on solemnly. "Jacob is no more. He was found guilty by his judges and executed with commendable haste and precision. He took

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to be choking him. "If what Mr. Chase says is true, we've got a precious short time to live. Well, we've—we've concluded to get all we can out of the time that's left, my lord. So I've come to ask if it will be all right with you and her ladyship, sir. We don't want to do anything that would seem forward and out of place, sir."

"It's very considerate of you, Saunders, but what the devil are you talking about?"

"Miss—Miss Pelham and I have decided to get—er—get married before it is too late."

Deppingham stared hard for a moment and then grinned broadly.

"You mean before you die?"

"That's it exactly, my lord. Haw, haw! It would be a bit late, wouldn't it, if we waited till afterward. Haw, haw! Splendid! So I have come to ask if you think it will interfere with your arrangements—if it should be married tonight?"

"I'm sure, Saunders, that it won't discommode me in the least," said his lordship genially. "By all means, Saunders, let it be tonight, for tomorrow we may die."

"Will you kindly speak to her ladyship, sir?"

"Gladly. And I'll take it as an honor if you will permit me to give away the bride."

"Thank you, my lord," cried Saunders, his face beaming. His lordship shook hands with him, whereupon his cup of happiness overflowed, notwithstanding the fact that his honeymoon was likely to be of scarcely any duration whatsoever.

The wedding took place that night in the little chapel. Chase deliberately took possession of the princess after the hollow wedding supper had come to an end. Her mood had changed. Now she was quite at ease with him. The taunting gleam in her eyes pre-empted evil moments for his peace of mind.

"I'm inspired," he said to her. "A wedding always inspires me."

"It's very strange that you've never married," she retorted. She was striving freely by his side, confident in her power to resist sentiment with mockery.

"Will you be my wife?" he asked abruptly. She caught her breath before laughing tolerantly and then looked into his eyes with a tantalizing ingenuousness.

"By no means," she responded. "I am not oppressed by the same views that actuated Miss Pelham. You see, Mr. Chase, I am quite confident that we are not to die in two weeks."

"I could almost wish that we could die in that time," he said.

"How very diabolical!"

"It may seem odd to you, but I'd rather see you dead than married to Prince Karl." She was silent. He went on. "Would you consent to be my wife if you felt in your heart that we should never leave this island?"

"I think I shall go in, Mr. Chase," she said, with a warning shake of her head.

"Don't, please! I'm not asking you to marry me if we should leave the island. You must give me credit for that," he argued whimsically.

"Ah, I see," she said, apparently very much relieved. "You want me only with the understanding that death should be quite close at hand to relieve you. And if I were to become your wife, here and now, and we should be taken from this dreadful place—what then?"

"You probably would have to go through a long and miserable career as plain Goodwife Chase," he explained.

"If it will make you any happier," she said, with a smile in which there lurked a touch of mischievous triumph, "I can say that I might consent to marry you if I were not so positive that I will leave the island soon. You seem to forget that my uncle's yacht is to call here, even though your cruises will not."

"I risk even that," he maintained stoutly.

She stopped suddenly, her hand upon his arm.

"Do you really love me?" she demanded earnestly.

"With all my soul, I swear to you," he replied, staggered by the abrupt change in her manner.

"Then don't make it any harder for me," she said. "You know that I could not do what you ask. Please, please be fair with me. I—I can't even just about it. It is too much to ask of me," she went on, with a strange firmness in her voice. "It would require centuries to make me forget that I am a princess, just as centuries were taken up in creating me what I am. I am no better than you, dear, but—but you understand?" She said it so pleadingly, so hopelessly, that he understood what it was that she could not say to him. "We seldom, if ever, marry the men whom God has made for us to love."

He lifted her hands to his breast and held them there. "If you will just go on loving me I'll some day make you forget you're a princess." She smiled and shook her head. Her hair gleamed red and bronze in the kindly light; a soft perfume came up to his nostrils.

The next day three of the native servants became violently ill, seized by the most appalling convulsions. At first a thrill of horror ran through the chateau. The plague—the plague in reality!

But these fears were quickly dissipated. The sufferers soon began to mend. By nightfall they were fairly well recovered. The mysterious seizure, however, was unexplained. Chase alone divined the cause. Poison! He was sure of it! But who the poisoner?

(To be Continued.)

"You saw him killed?" she said in the same awed voice, involuntarily drawing away from him.

"Yes," he said, "and you would have seen him killed, too, if you had gone down with me to ap—er—against him."

She looked up quickly and then thanked him almost in a whisper.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CENTURIES TO FORGET.

"My lord," said Saunders the next day, appearing before his lordship after an agitated hour of preparation. "It's come to a point where something's got to be done." He got that far and then turned quite purple. His collar seemed

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